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ABSTRACT

This group counseling guide, developed in response to counselors' requests for a group counseling booklet for children in grades K-8, whose parents are divorced or separated, contains materials that were produced, field tested and evaluated by experienced elementary and middle school guidance counselors. The major components of the guide are outlined in an initial section including specific goals; suggested session formats; activities, i.e., group discussions, role playing, films and audiovisual materials, books; guidelines for confidentiality and scheduling, i.e., 5-8 weekly group sessions of 30-60 minutes; suggested group size of 10 students; and selection procedures. A glossary of divorce and separation terms is provided along with suggestions for the opening session, and a series of warm-up activities. The 12 group activities, e.g., Things That Bother Me, New Rules Since There's Been a Change, Mixed Feelings, are not sequential and the activity sheets for each are printed on separate pages to allow duplication for group use. Samples of the parental letter/permission form, contract agreement, attendancce form and program evaluation form are included, as well as listings of on-loan films and filmstrips, and resources and references. (MCF)

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PARTING:

A Counselor's Guide for Children of Separated Parents

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Acknowledgments

In response to counselors' requests for a group counseling guide for children K-8, whose parents were divorced or separated, a committee of experienced elementary and middle school counselors piloted a draft guide and made recommendations for revision.

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Introduction

Each year some 1,000,000 American marriages end in divorce. This effects an estimated 18,000,000 children under the age of 18.

In South Carolina, the divorce and annulment rate has more than doubled in the decade since 1969, rising from 5,435 to 13,747 in 1979. The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control reports that 14,328 children under the age of 18 were involved in their parents' divorces or annulments in 1979. Since 1969, there have been 98,305 South Carolina children under 18 whose parents were divorced. Included in this data are divorces of common law marriages (those without a civil or religious ceremony) which can be dissolved only through divorce court or annulment.

More and more states, including South Carolina, now have "no fault" divorce laws, enabling a couple to divorce after a one-year separation, without one partner blaming the other. With a "no fault" divorce, neither partner has to have specific grounds for the divorce. Grounds for divorce in the state are desertion, cruelty, drunkenness, adultery, and habitual drug use. In South Carolina, divorce rates are highest (above 5 percent of population) in Richland, Greenville, Anderson, Lexington and Spartanburg counties, all of which are metropolitan areas.

Regardless of the statistics, the frequency of divorce and its effect on many school-aged children makes it a topic which should be included in school guidance and counseling services.

No studies are available on the effects of their parents' divorces on South Carolina school children. National studies, however, indicate that parental breakups adversely affect many students' academic achievement, their behavior, their self-concepts, and their ability to get along well with other children. Many writers feel that children usually are more damaged by living with both parents in a troubled marriage. Dr. Lee Salk, writing in *Harper's Bazaar* on "How to Protect Your Children" states, "The most important thing to remember is that when two people are divorcing each other, they are not divorcing their children. Both parents should remain close to them."

Dr. Salk and others feel that most children experience some relief at the divorce, because they have known for some time that all was not well at home. Current writers also agree that most children's first reaction is that they are to blame in some way for the breakup. Some

react with anger, shame or fear for the future; others react silently, which designates shock and the need for time to think it over. Recent articles and books caution divorcing parents against using their children as bargaining tools for alimony, property settlements and child custody. Parents are also warned against using children as therapists by injecting their own problems and feelings into their offspring's lives.

According to *The New Encyclopedia of Child Care and Guidance*, the breakup of a marriage is serious for all members of the family. The mother, father and home are a young child's world, and if a parent should leave, the child's whole world is shaken for a time. Even though school-age children have wider interests, the home and parents are still the foundation of their lives. The writers further state that "Experience clearly indicates that when parents are hopelessly at odds, even when dissension has been beneath the surface, a definite separation, though painful, comes as a relief to the children."

This book also advises that divorcing parents decide how to make later arrangements as the children grow and family needs or circumstances change. As for marrying again after divorce, it suggests talking in advance with the children about the possibility of remarriage and giving them time to express their hopes, fears, and resentments and to make friends with the prospective stepparent.

For some children, divorce means moving to a new city or state, a new house and a new school, leaving their friends and familiar surroundings. For others, it is a question of adjusting to having one parent living away from the house but usually available for visiting. For some, it means living in two separate houses part-time with their mothers and part-time with their fathers.

Adjusting to a reduced income can also present problems for children.

Regardless of custody arrangements, having one's parents divorced is an adjustment for which some children may require counseling when they, their parents or their teachers request it. Many children will benefit from group counseling as they realize that other children share similar problems. Before starting group counseling, it is essential for the counselor to obtain the permission of the parent who has legal custody of the child, or both parents in the case of joint custody.

Major Components

PURPOSE This guide has been prepared in response to requests from South Carolina guidance counselors who recognized the need for such a booklet in conducting group counseling for children whose parents were divorced or separated. It was field-tested by experienced South Carolina elementary and middle school guidance counselors. The counselors tested all activities with students and evaluated them, as well as making other suggestions which have been incorporated into this publication.

GOALS The major objectives of this guide are correlated with the State Department of Education's *A Model for Guidance-by-Objectives for Elementary and Middle Schools, K-8*, particularly those objectives aimed at improving student self-concepts, positive attitudes and relationships with others through group counseling.

Specific goals of this guide are:

1. to help students adjust to a major change in their lives which may adversely affect their academic progress and behavior

2. to help students improve their skills in problem solving, communication, listening and discussion

3. to help students cope more effectively with changes inherent in divorce/separation

4. to encourage students to feel better about themselves and other members of their families

5. to encourage students to realize that their feelings about their parents' divorce or separation are natural

6. to help students understand feelings, how they affect people, and how to express their feelings in positive, constructive ways.

PROGRAM Integral parts of the program are:

1. group discussions

2. role playing

3. films and other audiovisual materials on the topic (p. 32)

4. books, fiction and non-fiction, about children learning to cope with changes occasioned by divorce or separation (p. 30)

5. confidentiality of personal experiences related in the group

6. activities which help children cope with their emotions and behavior.

SCHEDULE Weekly group counseling sessions should run for a period of 30-60 minutes, depending on the children's maturity level and the class schedule. Sessions should continue for 5-8 weeks, depending on participants' needs.

GROUP SIZE To encourage group communication and coherence, groups should not be larger than ten students.

SELECTION Students may be selected through self-referrals, parent or teacher referrals, or the counselor's own knowledge of the students. It is important that students participate voluntarily; under no circumstances should anyone be forced to attend the group. Besides obtaining written parental permission for a child to participate in group counseling, counselors need to explain the purpose and confidential nature of counseling to the parents or guardians of all children involved.

While counselors should not become involved in family or marriage counseling, offering concurrent voluntary parenting groups might be considered. However, the confidential relationship between student and counselor must be maintained at all times.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH TEACHERS It is vital to have the permission of the teacher who must release the student from class for group counseling. Program objectives should be explained to the teachers of children who will participate. Input from teachers is also helpful in understanding changes in student behavior or academic achievement. Children may need tutors or special help to catch up or keep up with their school work.

PRIVATE COUNSELING In addition to group counseling, some children affected by divorce or parental separation may need private counseling to cope with these changes in their lives.

REFERRALS Children experiencing severe emotional problems resulting from their parents' divorce or separation should be referred to appropriate community resources for assistance during this difficult period of adjustment.

Using This Guide

The opening session is most important, since it establishes the atmosphere of trust and free expression necessary for success. Allowing students to take part in setting the ground rules increases the likelihood that they will adhere to them. Contracts are also useful in helping students to feel part of the group and to take some responsibility for their own participation. Suggestions for the first session are on page 7. Get-acquainted games and a brief film may help set the stage for the series of sessions.

Warm-up activities are provided (pages 8-9) to enable students to get to know each other better and to feel comfortable with the group.

Other activities, field-tested by counselors during the 1980-81 school year, appear on pages 12-24. To allow flexibility, they are not printed in sequential order. These activities may be modified to meet the needs and interests of the group. They should be augmented by relevant films, books and audiovisual materials, such as those suggested in the back of this guide.

All activities have been printed on separate pages so that they may be duplicated for members of the group to use. For younger children and those with limited reading and writing ability, many activities may be done orally.

Before starting any activity, please read the directions for counselors, beginning on page 10. These guidelines on each activity include discussion questions and other suggestions, as well as any special precautions to be considered. These guidelines were suggested by experienced counselors, based on their pilot-test of this guide.

Glossary of Terms

Definitions of major terms dealing with divorce and separation will help school guidance counselors in their approach to counseling students affected by their parents' breaking up. Counselors should be familiar with these terms so that they can discuss them accurately.

Marriage is a social and legal relationship between a man and a woman under a contract in which a couple pledge to live together all their lives. It is the traditional religious and governmental basis of the family, making the couple legally responsible for their children.

Common law marriage (recognized as legal in South Carolina) is a marital relationship created by agreement between a man and a woman living together without having a church or civil wedding ceremony.

Divorce is a legal process which dissolves the marriage contract and enables both partners to remarry if they so desire.

Separation is a legal process which enables the husband and wife to live apart, but does not break the marriage contract nor free them to remarry.

Annulment is a judicial decision declaring a marriage not valid.

Uncontested divorce is one in which the partner charged with grounds for divorce does not object.

"No fault" divorce does not require that either partner file charges against the other on such grounds as desertion, cruelty or adultery.

Custody is a decision, usually settled out of court, establishing which parent will keep the children and assume the major responsibility for them. If divorcing parents cannot agree, the judge generally considers the child's welfare, happiness, sex, age, and health in determining custody. Judges may also consider which parent is legally "at fault" and older children's preferences for the parent with whom they wish to live. While courts generally award children under 18 to mothers, some recent cases have resulted in fathers' obtaining child custody. In some cases, custody is given to grandparents or other relatives.

Joint custody is an arrangement in which children spend half their time in one home and the other half in the other home (when parents live in the same neighborhood and school district). This type of custody gives both parents equal rights and responsibilities for the children.

Split custody gives one or more children to one parent and the other child or children to the other parent.

Alimony is a monetary sum which one partner agrees to pay to the other for support.

Child support is a monetary sum which the divorced partner who does not have custody agrees to pay for the care of the child. It usually continues until the child completes school or college, marries, becomes self-supporting, or reaches a certain age, depending upon the terms of the individual settlement.

Visiting rights, usually settled out of court, specify days, holidays, vacations and hours that children may visit the parent with whom they do not live. What happens after visiting rights are settled depends upon the cooperation of all concerned. Sometimes parents have a hard time maintaining a relationship with their children after divorce because they feel guilty, awkward or bitter. Some parents act like Santa Claus and treat each visit as an occasion for gifts, fun and games, without discipline or serious conversation. Some divorced parents try to turn their children against the other parent or compete for the children's love.

Some states have a Bill of Rights for children of divorced parents to help ensure that they have a good home, a chance to know and love both parents, and the opportunities they would have had if their parents had not divorced.

A stepparent is the mother's or father's new husband or wife. Sometimes the stepfather will legally adopt the children whose last name may be changed to his. Adjusting to a stepparent, and perhaps stepbrothers and/or stepsisters, is often difficult for children. Establishing relationships with a "new" family or parent-figure requires patience and understanding on the part of all concerned.

Suggestions for Opening Session

Purposes of the group:

1. Learning more about yourself and others
2. Learning positive ways to deal with the changes in your home life
3. Helping yourself and other students to find constructive ways to make decisions and solve problems now and in the future.

Sample group rules:

1. One person talks at a time
2. Listen to the person who is talking; tune in not only to the words but also to the feelings behind the words. (Example: If I say, "I just had a big argument with my mother", what would I be feeling? Angry? Frustrated? Ashamed?)
3. Be yourself
4. Do not criticize or "cut down" other people. You do not have to agree with what anyone else says, but should try to accept each other as people
5. Keep all group discussions confidential
6. Participate: by sharing the group time and not monopolizing the conversation

   by being an active listener

   by *not* talking if that's your wish

Warm-up Activities

Students in a counseling group usually need some "get acquainted" activities to feel comfortable with each other, learn each other's names and begin to feel like part of the group. Some groups may need to continue warm-up exercises for several weeks.

WARM-UP 1: "Houses My Family Live In"

Ask children to make folders from construction paper to keep throughout the group counseling sessions. They can keep copies of each written activity or drawing they do in these folders.

Ask each student to draw a picture of the houses in which his or her family live. Ask them to draw in the figures (stick figures will do) of each person who lives in the houses, and label each figure with their names, like Mom, Dad, brother, sister, grandparents, and me.

Some students will have stepparents and stepbrothers or sisters, aunts, uncles, or cousins—or other people not related to them—living in their households. Let students determine whom they consider family. They may also draw other houses in which their married brothers or sisters, grandparents, or other relatives live.

PURPOSE: This activity emphasizes that although some of our families live in separate houses, they still remain our family. It also helps students to understand the family situations of other members of the group and to notice similarities and differences with their own situations.

CAUTION! Children with a parent in jail or a hospital may not want to identify the place where this parent lives. Others may not know where the absent parent lives.

DISCUSSION QUESTION IDEAS:

1. Is someone still in your family after they go to live in a different house?

2. Is your brother or sister who has married and moved to another house still part of your family?

3. Can you love someone who lives in a different house as much as you love someone who lives with you?

4. Have you ever thought about living with your other parent instead?

5. What did you learn today?

WARM-UP 2: "Scrambled Feelings"

Write words appropriate for your group's reading and maturity levels on the chalkboard or on cards. Then ask them to unscramble them.

gyran _____

ads _____

dacser _____

tuligy _____

neyoll _____

velodun _____

payph _____

droup _____

liverede _____

trafursdet _____

sappedotinid _____

mitid _____

Brainstorm and put answers on the chalk board.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Put letters of each word on cards, place them in the center of the group, and ask the group to unscramble them without talking to each other. Race the clock, marking down the time it takes to unscramble each word.

2. Divide the group into teams and give each group the same scrambled word to see which team finishes first.

3. Give one letter to each student and ask them to stand in the correct order to spell the word.

After unscrambling words selected:

Discuss them and other feelings. Discussion topics may include:

1. What are feelings?

2. When do we experience feelings?

3. Do we have control over the way we feel?

4. Can we control how we react to feelings?

WARM-UP 3: "Coping with Feelings"

Give each group member a "cloud" cut from plain white paper.

Ask each student to complete the sentence, "When I feel angry, frustrated, unhappy (and other feelings), I can_____" (by listing ideas which help them feel better but will not cause problems or hurt anyone or anything).

Have students write positive ways to cope with feelings on their own clouds. Paste clouds on a blue sky background for the bulletin board.

Encourage students to give constructive ways of dealing with their feelings. Examples might include:

listening to music

watching television

reading

walking the dog

running or jogging

playing a favorite sport

taking a warm bath or shower

singing

calling a friend

walking in the woods

playing with friends

CAUTION! To maintain confidentiality, students should not sign clouds.

DISCUSSION TOPIC IDEAS:

1. What bad ways can we express unhappy feelings?

2. What good ways can we express unhappy feelings?

3. How can we express our feelings in better ways?

Guidelines for Group Activities

"GETTING TO KNOW YOU" (Page 12)

This and similar name games are good opening activities for a group, particularly if it consists of students from different homerooms who do not know each other well.

The list of categories for this activity can be changed to fit each particular group. This is a good ice-breaker and a non-threatening way to get some information about each student.

This activity can be timed, so that group members try to "beat the clock," by setting a 5-10 minute time limit.

"CHANGES" (Page 13)

After students have written or talked about changes in their lives, hold a general discussion on:

1. What are some common changes in the lives of this group?

2. How do you feel about these changes?

3. What are you doing to adjust to these changes?

"THINGS THAT BOTHER ME" (Page 14)

After students complete this activity, counselors may tally the answers and note common problems for later group discussion. A group who is comfortable with each other at this point may list common problems and work in pairs or as a group to generate alternative solutions. The pros and cons to each solution may be discussed.

"COPING WITH FEELINGS" (Page 15)

After doing the activity, the group may discuss the following questions:

1. How would your alternative method of handling the situation affect others?

2. What are other alternative methods of handling this problem?

"COMMUNICATION" (Page 16)

Children should understand that while their divorced parents may not see each other or talk to each other now, both parents still like their children. Children may be encouraged to discuss their questions and feelings with their parents.

After children have gotten their parents' responses, the group may discuss or role-play the different pertinent questions and reactions.

CAUTION! Some children may not be able to ask questions or express their feelings at home because of the situation there.

"NEW RULES" (Page 17)

Encourage students to:

1. Select one rule at home which they want to discuss with their parent or guardian.

2. Tell why they feel this rule needs changing.

3. Discuss how rules can be changed to improve conditions at home.

4. Relate how they feel about taking part in setting rules at home.

"HAPPINESS IS . . ." (Page 18)

After the group has written or talked about happy feelings and ways to make other people happy, discuss the following:

1. Do you still enjoy doing the same things with both parents that you did before they lived in separate houses?

2. How do you know when you feel happy?

3. How do you know when you make someone else happy?

"MIXED FEELINGS" (Page 19)

After students complete the activities on the positive and negative aspects of divorce/separation, hold a general discussion on:

1. What things are better for you now?

2. What things are not better for you?

"FROM ME TO YOU" (Page 20)

When students complete their letters and/or pictures for their absent parents, some may want to mail them.

CAUTION! Counselors should exercise caution that correspondence with the absent parent is in the child's best interest. If this parent is in prison, a mental institution or drug/alcohol rehabilitation center, special caution should be taken in case the parent's response might cause the child unnecessary grief.

Children whose parents abused them or other members of their family may not wish to do this activity. Such children may be encouraged to send their message to their grandparents or some other relative of the absent parent instead.

"HOME RESPONSIBILITIES" (Page 21)

After completing the first part of the activity, hold a short discussion on:

1. Which jobs are shared?

2. Why is it important for each person to do his or her own part?

3. Why is it important to help or to receive help with some jobs?

After listing family chores and matching them with the abilities of each member of the family, discuss:

1. What changes, if any, would you make in assigning home chores?

2. Why would you make these changes?

Children may want to share this activity with the parent with whom they live.

"MAKE BELIEVE" (Pages 22-23)

Counselors may wish to alter these role-playing activities to fit other common situations in the group. By acting out familiar situations, students become aware of their own attitudes and feelings, as well as those of others. They also usually learn to handle certain situations better after hearing how other students handle them. Some students may prefer to use puppets to talk.

After enacting appropriate roles, hold a group discussion on:

1. Would you react differently in this situation? Why?

2. What course of action would be better for you? Why?

"WHAT SHOULD SARA DO?" (Page 24)

Writing an advice column letter could be an "Ann Landers" or " Dear Abby" type of activity for children 10 years old and older. Students may also discuss or role-play Sara, her mother, her mother's date, and her father. Group discussion topics could include:

1. Alternative courses of action for Sara.

2. What are the consequences of each action now?

3. What are the probable future consequences of each action?

4. What do you think would be the best thing for Sara to do?

_____

YOUR NAME

Getting to Know You

Find someone in the group who:

(Have one student who fits each category sign his/her name below)

1. Loves to eat vegetables _____
2. Has improved his or her grades this year _____
3. Loves animals _____
4. Is living with his or her mother _____
5. Has a stepbrother or stepsister _____
6. Does homework with the TV on _____
7. Loves music _____
8. Never gets into trouble at school _____
9. Often gets into trouble at school _____
10. Is living with his or her father _____
11. Has a stepmom or stepdad living at home _____
12. Loves sports _____
13. Is living with his or her grandparent(s) _____

RULES OF THE GAME:

1. When the leader says "Go," go quickly and quietly to find another student who fits each category. Have each sign his or her name on the matching line.
2. No one student can sign a paper more than twice.
3. When you have finished, give your paper to the leader to check.

Changes

Many changes occur in our lives as we grow up. Children and youth grow both physically and mentally. We learn to do new things. We meet new people. Adults continue to change, too.

List three things that have changed in your family.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Now write three things that have changed for you.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

What changes do you like?

_____

Why?

_____

What changes don't you like?

_____

Why?

_____

Things That Bother Me

Put an "X" before the problems which bother you. Circle the three problems which bother you most.

_____Being in a new school
_____Losing my temper
_____Worrying
_____Being shy
_____Having people talk about me
_____Being teased
_____One parent lives out of town
_____Not having anyone to tell my troubles to
_____Too many chores at home
_____Nothing to do at home
_____Not getting enough attention at home
_____Getting too much attention at home
_____Ashamed that my parents are divorced
_____Missing my old friends
_____Don't like my stepmother or stepfather
_____Nightmares
_____Being criticized
_____Being left out of family discussions
_____Being angry at the parent I live with
_____Being an only child
_____Wanting to run away from home
_____Being left alone too much
_____Feeling guilty about the way I act
_____Not liking the parent I live with
_____People are unfair to me
_____Having too many responsibilities
_____Having headaches
_____Wanting to visit my father or mother who left
_____Afraid I caused my parents to separate
_____Can't eat or sleep as well as I use to

Pick one of the problems you circled and write two things you will do to try to solve it:

_____

_____

_____

Coping with Feelings

Sometimes I really feel angry or frustrated, and I take out these feelings on other people instead of the person with whom I am angry. This happened to me once when I _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

It made me feel _____

_____

_____

It made the other person/people _____

_____

_____

_____

I could have handled that situation better by _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Communication

Communication is very important in a family. When you are worried or upset, you generally feel better after you have discussed some of the things that cause you to feel that way. You may want to discuss some concerns you have about your parents' divorce or separation.

The questions below may help you decide what you need to ask.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When a man and woman get a divorce (or separation), do they divorce their children?
2. Why do people get a divorce/separation?
3. Did I do anything to cause the divorce/separation?
4. How does the divorce/separation change my life?
5. Would my parents get back together again if I did anything different?
6. Why does Mom or Dad put me "in the middle" all the time?
7. Why do Mom and Dad say mean things about each other?
8. What can I do to help my family feel better?
9. What could my family do to help me feel better?

New Rules Since There Has Been a Change

List some rules at home that affect you. Then check each rule that you would like to change.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

Rewrite any rules you would like to change.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Why do you think these rules exist?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

How would the people at your house feel about these changes?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Happiness Is . . .

List some things you enjoy doing.

_____

_____

_____

_____

What are some things your mother and father do to make you feel happy?

MOM	DAD
1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____
4. _____	4. _____

Name at least two things you can do to make your mother and father happy.

MOM	DAD
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Mixed Feelings

Jimmy's parents used to fight and yell at each other all the time. They stopped laughing together and they stopped being friends. Sometimes, Jimmy could hear them arguing at night and it really frightened him. Then they decided to separate.

Although Jimmy was upset and felt sorry when his father went away, he was relieved that there were no more fights.

Do you feel that some things are better for Jimmy now that his parents separated?

How are things better for Jimmy?

What things might not be better for him?

What things might be better for his mother?

What things might be better for his father?

From Me to You

After a divorce, one parent leaves home. Sometimes they feel that their children no longer like them or have much time for them. You may want to write a note or draw some pictures (or both) to make your absent Dad or Mom feel happy.

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Home Responsibilities

Starting with yourself, list the family members in your home and write major home responsibilities for each of you by name.

	Person	Responsibilities
1.		
2.		
3.		

(Use other side of paper if you need more space)

Now list 10 big chores which must be done at home. Beside each, write the requirements most needed for this chore (such as size, strength, skill, talent, experience, knowledge). Then write the name(s) of the person(s) in your family who could do this job well.

	Chores	Chief Requirements	Person(s) Capable
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			

Make Believe

Role play the following situations. Try to imagine how each person feels and acts.

Your mother says you cannot have as much money to spend now that the divorce is final. She needs most of the money to pay bills. It is not your fault they got a divorce. You wonder why you have to suffer.

Your father's parents never come to see you anymore. You know your grandparents miss seeing you and you still love them. Your mother is afraid they will talk about your dad.

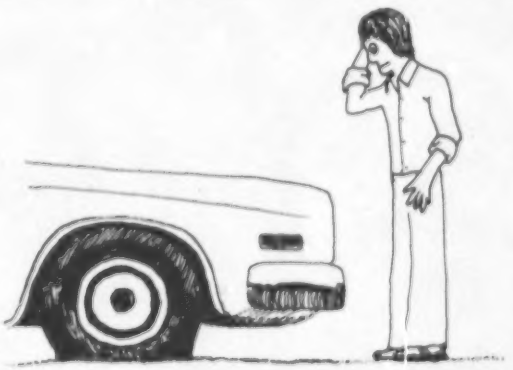
Your dad takes you out to dinner at a restaurant saying he has a surprise for you. The surprise turns out to be a lady you have never seen before. She tries to be friendly but you are angry and disappointed.

You want to spend a few days with your father who lives in a town nearby. Your mother doesn't want you to go.

Your mother cries all the time. She stays in the house a lot. She even asks you to buy the groceries for her. In the past she always liked shopping and going places.

Your father never spent much time with you before the divorce. Now he wants to take you to ballgames and movies each week.

You can't seem to do anything right anymore. You told your father that you hate him. You did not really mean it, but he got real quiet and looked real sad.



Your mother calls you the man of the family now that your father has gone. But you are only ten years old and you don't know how to fix things around the house like your father did. Besides, you don't want to take on adult responsibilities.

Your stepmother asks you to call her Mom, but you don't want to because that's what you call your real mother.

Your teacher is upset because several times she caught you daydreaming in class. She called on you twice but you were not paying attention to the lesson. You were thinking about the good times you used to have with your family and wishing that you could all be together again.

What Should Sara Do?

Sara and her parents have lived in Columbia all of her life. When Sara was 12, her parents realized that they no longer loved each other. They decided to get a divorce. Sara stayed with her mother at their old home, while her father moved to an apartment. About a year later, Sara's mother started going out on dates.

Sara resents being left alone when her mother goes out. In fact, she resents her mother's acting like a teenager—getting all dressed up and looking at herself in the mirror all the time, and talking on the phone to friends.

Sara wants her mother to stay at home unless she goes out to visit her female friends or relatives. Sometimes she thinks she hates her mother. At other times, she feels happy that her mother is smiling and laughing again. Sara feels so mixed up about things that she sometimes thinks she would be better off living with her father.

If you were "Ann Landers" or "Dear Abby," how would you answer the questions below?

What are some of Sara's problems?

_____

_____

Give two ways Sara could handle her feelings toward her mother:

_____

_____

What are the likely consequences of each?

_____

_____

What problems might Sara face if she lived with her father?

_____

_____

Give two ways Sara could handle her feelings about her mother's date.

_____

_____

What are the likely consequences of each?

_____

_____

Sample Forms and Resources

Dear

We are in the process of organizing group counseling sessions on the topic of divorce/separation and its effects on children, beginning _____.

Children whose parents are divorced or in the process of separation do not necessarily need counseling. However, research shows that many suffer some emotional stress, change their behavior, and neglect their school work because of their feelings or fears about this change in their lives.

The purpose of group counseling is not to have children disclose personal family matters. Rather, its purpose is to help children to:

1. understand their own feelings and realize that other schoolmates have similar experiences and feelings;
2. learn skills to express their feelings in constructive ways and to cope positively with the changes in their lives;
3. appreciate the positive aspects of these changes.

This group will meet for_____ sessions of_____ minutes each. The program will not interfere with your child's academic schedule, since each student will be released by the teacher for that period. These sessions generally benefit participants socially, emotionally and academically.

If you agree to your child's being included in these group counseling sessions, please sign the attached form and send it to me at the school before_____. If you have any questions, I will be happy to answer them if you call me at_____. We can talk then or make an appointment for a private conference if you prefer to come in person.

Sincerely,

Guidance Counselor

I agree that _____ may participate in group counseling sessions dealing with divorce/separation.

_____ (Date)

_____ (Signature of Parent or Guardian)

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Contract Agreement

I,_____, agree to be an active participant in group counseling sessions that will meet for_____weeks at the_____period on_____.

I promise to attend all meetings, except in an emergency, and to follow the rules decided on by the group.

_____	_____
Signature of Group Participant	Date
_____	_____
Signature of Group Leader	Date
_____	_____
Signature of Parent	Date
_____	_____
Signature of Teacher	Date
_____	_____
Signature of Principal	Date

Group Guidance Attendance Form

Names of Students	Homeroom	Sessions								Comments
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	

Program Evaluation

1. Did you enjoy being a member of the group? Yes____ No____
2. Did everyone in the group get the opportunity to talk if they so desired? Yes____ No____
3. Which activity did you enjoy most? _____
   Why? _____
4. Which activity did you enjoy least? _____
   Why? _____
5. Do you feel the group helped you in any way? Yes____ No____
   If yes, how? _____
   _____
   If no, why not? _____
   _____
6. Would you encourage other students to take part in a group of this nature? Yes____ No____
   If yes, why? _____
   _____
   If no, why not? _____
   _____

Student Bibliography

Bates, Betty. *Bugs in Your Ears.* New York: Holiday House. This story portrays an eighth grader whose divorced mother marries again. In first-person narrative, it reveals the girl's feelings toward her new stepfather and his three children. Her reaction to the jarring truth about her own father helps make her appreciate her step-family.

Bauer, Marion Dane. *Shelter from the Wind.* New York: Seabury Press, 1976. After her father remarries, 12-year-old Stacy runs away in search of her natural mother. On the prairie she meets an independent, wise old woman who helps her face her emotional conflicts and do some growing up.

Cain, Barbara S. and Benedek, Elissa P. *What Would You Do? A Child's Book About Divorce.* Indianapolis: Youth Publications, 1976. This preschool and primary grade picture book presents common reactions to divorce, asking the question "What would you do?" after each, to invite children to express and accept their emotions.

Fradin, Dennis B. *Bad Luck Tony.* New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1978. A pregnant stray dog follows a small boy home. This upsets his hard-working, divorced mother, but Tony's adventurous grandfather helps find a home for the stray.

Green, Constance C. *Your Old Pal, Al.* New York: Viking Press. This light and lively story describes a teenaged girl's adventures with her friends, her mother, her father and his new wife and three sons. It reveals their feelings sensitively, humorously, and realistically.

Hazen, Barbara Shook. *Two Homes to Live in.* New York: Human Sciences Press, 1978. This preschool and primary grade picture book gently handles the facts and feelings of the divorce process from a preschooler's viewpoint.

Heide, Florence Parry. *When the Sad One Comes to Stay.* Philadelphia: Lippincott. Caught among her fashionable but shallow mother, her long-absent father, and a warm but shabby old woman, a young girl has to decide which type of life she will choose.

Helmering, Doris Wild. *I Have Two Families.* Nashville: Abington Press, 1981. Patty describes her feelings about her parents' divorce and the living arrangements they decide upon. Ages 6-9.

Lisker, Sonia O. and Dean, Leigh. *Two Special Cards.* New York: Harcourt, 1976. Written for preschool and primary children ages 4-8, this story is told from the perspective of an eight-year-old girl. It depicts her emotions before and after her parents' divorce and concentrates on the positive aspects of two happy homes.

Noble, June. *Two Homes for Lynn.* New York: Holt-Rinehart, 1979. A make-believe friend helps a six-year-old girl make the transition from living in one house with both parents to dividing her time between them.

Okimota, Jean Davis. *My Mother is Not Married to My Father.* New York: Putnam's Sons, 1979. Grades 6 and up. Eleven-year-old Cynthia and her six-year-old sister try to adjust to their parents' separation and divorce.

Roy, Ron. *Breakfast with My Father.* Clarison Books/Houghton Mifflin, 1980. Grades K-3. A young boy's parents are separating. His father moves out and he is afraid he will never see his father again. But everything turns out different than what he had expected.

Sobol, Harriet Langsam. *My Other-Mother, My Other-Father.* New York: MacMillan. This photo essay is narrated by a young girl who describes the pros and cons of having two sets of parents and four sets of grandparents. Appropriate for children ages 8-12.

Thomas, Inathe. *Eliza's Daddy.* New York: Harcourt, 1976. This story, for children ages 6-10, depicts a young black girl's visits to her father and her attempts to meet his new wife, stepdaughter and baby.

On-Loan Films and Filmstrips

Available from the South Carolina Department of Mental Health, P. O. Box 485, Columbia, South Carolina 29202, are:

"A Family Album"
A family talks candidly about their attitudes before and after the divorce, with flashbacks from the family album.

"First Year A. D. (After Divorce)"
An asthmatic child who is hospitalized has another attack after his estranged parents have a hostile quarrel at the hospital. (Recommended for adult workshops)

"It Has Nothing to do With You"
A teenaged boy arrives home to find his mother crying about her impending divorce. His father's request to help him move out further upsets the boy. This open-ended film enables viewers to think and talk about their reactions.

"Hide and Seek"
A junior high school student becomes introspective after his parents' divorce. Among the scenes are his possessive attitude toward his mother, his suspicion of her new boyfriend, and his relationships with his own friends.

"Feeling Left Out"
The purpose of this film is to help children of divorcing parents through the emotional adjustments of acceptance and resettlement.

Available from the South Carolina Department of Education, AV Library, 1513 Gervais Street, Columbia, South Carolina 29201:

"Honeymoon"
A young girl becomes upset when her mother plans to remarry and resents the replacement of her real father, who communicates to her solely through postcards of places he visits. Her new stepfather's mother takes care of her while the couple go on their honeymoon and she gradually accepts her stepfather, stepbrother and new grandmother. (Recommended for primary and intermediate students)

Available from Elementary/Middle School Guidance Consultant, 810 Rutledge Building, Columbia, South Carolina 29201:

"My Parents are Getting a Divorce"
This is a two-part filmstrip series for intermediate and high school students. The first part provides an overview of marital separation and discusses some of its immediate effects on parents and children. The second part deals mainly with the problems that families encounter in adjusting to life after divorce.

Resources
For Referral and Assistance

Parents Without Partners
International Youth Council (Sponsored by Parents Without Partners)
Attorney or family court judge who handles divorce cases
Ministers, priests or rabbis in the community
Family services agencies
State and local mental health agencies
YMCA or YWCA
Big Brothers Club
Big Sisters Club

References

Gardner, Richard A., M. D. *Boys' and Girls' Book about One-Parent Families.* New York: Putnam & Sons, 1978.

Gruenberg, Sidonie Matsner. Editor. *New Encyclopedia of Child Care Guidance.* New York: Doubleday, 1968.

Herog, Elizabeth and Sudia, Cecelia. "Families without Fathers," *Childhood Education.* January, 1972.

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Hozman, Thomas L. and Froiland, Donald J. "Children: Forgotten in Divorce," *Personnel and Guidance Journal.* May, 1977.

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Hozman, Thomas L. and Froiland, Donald J. "Families in Divorce: A Proposed Model for Counseling the Children," *The Family Coordinator.* July, 1976.

LeShan, Eda. *What's Going to Happen to Me?* New York: Four Winds Press, 1978.

Magid, Kenneth M. "Children Facing Divorce: A Treatment Program." *Personnel and Guidance Journal.* May, 1977.

Richards, Arlene and Willis, Irene. *How to Get it Together When Your Parents are Coming Apart.* New York: Bantam Books, 1976.

Salk, Dr. Lee. "Divorce: How to Protect Your Children," *Harper's Bazaar.* September, 1978.

Wilkinson, Gary S. and Bleck, Robert T. "Children's Divorce Groups," *Elementary School Guidance and Counseling.* February, 1977.